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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0183  
INFO WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 SAN SALVADOR 001117

SIPDIS

SOUTHCOM FOR GENERAL FRASER, GENERAL KEEN, AND THE EL SALVADOR WORKING GROUP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS EAID ES

SUBJECT: Mission Priorities for Disaster Relief Assistance

REF: 09 SAN SALVADOR 1172; 09 SAN SALVADOR 1081; 09 SAN SALVADOR 1057  
09 SAN SALVADOR FTR 2512

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Embassy San Salvador sees it in the United States national interest to offer a robust package of disaster relief assistance to President Funes and the GOES. The GOES has requested, at the highest levels, USG assistance to recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ida. During a series of meetings that WHA DAS Julissa Reynoso had with senior GOES leaders, the government prioritized El Salvador's urgent needs for assistance with reconstruction, rehabilitation, and disaster mitigation. Post strongly urges beyond the aid delivered in the emergency relief phase, additional resources to allow USAID and MILGROUP/SOUTHCOM to relocate and construct houses, rebuild strategic bridges and other vital government services (e.g. schools, health clinics potable water, etc...), and revitalize crops and livelihoods affected by the storm. Our vigorous response will validate President Funes's view of the U.S. as the strategic partner of choice for El Salvador. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The November 7-8 torrential rains associated with Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ida (Reftels) destroyed over 3000 homes and left thousands more at high risk of danger and in need of relocation. Schools and health clinics were destroyed or are in danger. Crops and livelihoods were affected, leaving the potential for a significant humanitarian disaster in the coming months as agricultural jobs in the sugar, bean, and coffee fields expire and families who rely on subsistence agriculture in between harvests find their food security jeopardized.

¶3. The attached Microsoft Excel spreadsheet summarizes the information detailed in paragraphs 4-8 below.

Focusing Existing Resources on Hardest Hit Areas

¶4. (U) In response to the Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ida disaster, both USAID and MILGROUP/SOUTHCOM shifted the focus of certain bilateral assistance programs into the affected area to maintain a continuing stream of USG aid. USAID redirected approximately USD 1.5 million of existing funds to restore livelihoods affected by the storm. In addition, USAID is working with the GOES to change the geographic focus of USD 10 million of anti-financial crisis funds to the affected area. USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance is finalizing two grants totaling USD 1 million to provide potable water, temporary housing, and revitalization of livelihoods.

¶ 15. MILGROUP/SOUTHCOM also shifted FY2010 Phase III Beyond the Horizon (BTH) projects, including 3 Medical Readiness Training Exercises (MEDRETEs) and an engineering exercise, into areas hit by the storm. MILGROUP maintains access to Joint Task Force - Bravo assets and plans to schedule additional Medical Civil Action Programs (MEDCAPs), about one per quarter, in the affected area. MILGROUP is also managing several minimal cost Humanitarian Assistance projects, including minor repairs to schools and clinics, restoring water to affected communities and other projects. SOUTHCOPM plans to conduct a Phase I BTH exercise in early 2011, maintaining the focus on these same areas. MILGROUP/SOUTHCOM is redirecting USD 650,000 of prior-year approved Overseas Humanitarian Disaster Assistance and Civil Aid (OHDACA) funds toward drilling wells for potable water and reconstruction of a school. MILGROUP/SOUTHCOM is also providing USD 1 million for the construction of an emergency operations center and warehouse.

¶ 16. The GOES has requested an estimated USD 8 million in FY 2010 funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food for Progress (FFP) program. The main objective of the program is to implement trade-capacity-building and economic-development activities which will create opportunities for micro, small, and

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medium agricultural, industrial, and services enterprises, with a focus on the affected area. During a November 12 meeting in Washington with El Salvador's Minister of Agriculture, Manuel Sevilla, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said USDA would work to expedite El Salvador's request for FFP funds, given the severity of the Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ida disaster. USDA's review of El Salvador's FFP request remains pending.

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More Funds Urgently Needed

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¶ 17. (U) In close coordination with the GOES and other donors, Post offers the following list of priorities for additional USG assistance to El Salvador:

\* USD 1 million to build 10,000 permanent homes: With a focus on disaster mitigation, the USG would contract the rebuilding of homes that were destroyed by the storm, and move or reconstruct other homes currently located in high-risk areas. This project would provide local employment and significant economic stimulus. These funds could come from SOUTHCOPM or via a USAID supplemental appropriation.

\* USD 5 million to reconstruct four major bridges: Complementing a Japan International Cooperation Agency commitment of USD 3.1 million to rebuild the Melara bridge in La Libertad Department, Post recommends that USG funds be directed to the reconstruction of the 34.5 meter Acahuapa bridge, with an estimated cost of USD 1.5 million, as well as the San Antonio bridge, at a cost of USD 1.3 million. Both bridges were identified by the GOES as urgent priorities for reconstruction to reopen key economic arteries. Post recommends that additional funds be allocated for the reconstruction of the Jiboa 1B bridge (USD 1.3 million) and the Verapaz bridge (USD 900,000). These funds could come from SOUTHCOPM or via a USAID supplemental appropriation.

\* USD 2 million to provide transportation for 43 modular bridges purchased by the GOES: The GOES plans to purchase 43

temporary modular bridges at a cost of USD 12 million from up to three U.S. companies to replace bridges destroyed or damaged by the storm. The GOES has requested that the USG assist with transporting these bridges from their place of manufacture to El Salvador. The GOES requested air transportation to expedite reconstruction of the bridges, but land and sea transport may be more cost-effective solutions. DOD air or sea assets could transport the bridges, or additional DOD/SOUTHCOM resources could pay for part or all of the transportation costs.

\* USD 4.5 million to relocate six schools and three medical clinics: The GOES has identified six schools and three medical clinics currently located in high-risk areas. USG funds from SOUTHCOM or an additional USAID supplemental would be used to relocate or reconstruct these schools and clinics in safer areas.

\* USD 750,000 for early warning systems and disaster prevention training at the national, departmental, and local levels: GOES officials repeatedly make reference to a municipality in the affected area that suffered severe material damages, but not a single loss of life. A functioning early warning system and well trained relief officials in government decisively mobilized and saved lives. The GOES is looking to replicate disaster prevention best practices. This could be a joint SOUTHCOM/USAID effort with funding from SOUTHCOM and USAID/OFDA.

\* USD 5 million for the construction of integrated regional emergency operations centers and warehouses: These funds would be used to construct five regional-level emergency operations centers and warehouses. The aftermath of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ida revealed a lack of coordination between the national government and departmental relief coordinators, as well as vulnerabilities related to the lack of stockpiled relief supplies on site at the affected areas. The funds could be provided through a USAID supplemental request or from additional SOUTHCOM funds.

¶8. (U) If additional DOD or other sources of funding are made available beyond levels to pay for projects described in paragraph

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6, Post recommends committing those funds to the following strategic priorities:

\* Reconstruct/Relocate additional homes away from high-risk areas - approximately USD 10,000 each

\* Reconstruct additional bridges - ranging from USD 50,000 to 2.5 million each

\* Relocate/reconstruct additional schools and health clinics - approximately USD 500,000 each

\* Construct additional emergency operation centers and warehouses - approximately USD 500,000 each

\* Stockpile emergency relief supplies in warehouses - approximately USD 750,000 across the network

\* Offer additional training for first responders and disaster relief coordinators - USD 1.2 million

\* Additional Anti-financial crisis stimulus funds for job reactivation in affected areas - USD 8 million

¶9. (SBU) Comment: The GOES, up to and including President Funes, has seen the USG response to this recent natural disaster as justification and reinforcement of Funes's decision to prioritize relations with the USA. Moving forward with the projects described above will leave a long-lasting impact.

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